The Cleveland Museum of Art

Press Release

For Immediate Release **Contact:** Stacie Leatherman, (216) 421- 7340, ext. 265
Mar. 20, 2000

BRAZILIAN DIVA VIRGÍNIA RODRIGUES PERFORMS AT CMA

"The new voice in Brazilian music."

— *The New York Times*

CLEVELAND — Rising from obscurity to international fame in the past two years, Brazilian contralto Virgínia Rodrigues is including a Cleveland stop on her latest U.S. tour, directed by renowned Brazilian singer-composer Caetano Veloso. She will perform Friday, Apr. 14, 2000 at 7:30 p.m. in the Cleveland Museum of Art's (CMA) Gartner Auditorium. Her Cleveland debut concert is part of the museum's **VIVA! Performing Arts Festival**, which offers the finest in international music and dance performance. Rodrigues, whose fusion of Afro-Brazilian rhythms and church music has been called "Gregorian samba" (*Pulse*), will be accompanied by her six-piece ensemble. A limited number of tickets is available at $24; advance purchase is strongly recommended by calling **1-888-CMA-0033** or online at **www.clemusart.com**.

The 36-year-old Rodrigues achieved stardom nearly overnight, performing to ecstatic audiences in Brazil, Europe, and the United States. A native of Bahia, in eastern Brazil, Rodrigues comes from humble beginnings — she worked as a manicurist, maid, and cook in a poverty-stricken neighborhood outside Bahia's capital city, Salvador. Unable to afford formal music lessons, the naturally gifted singer joined choirs in both Catholic and Protestant churches and sang at weddings and other local events. After performing in a street theater production only a few years ago, Rodrigues was "discovered" by Caetano Veloso. Her richly textured voice moved Veloso to tears, and spurred the production of her first album, *Sol Negro* ("Black Sun") (Hannibal), released in 1998 to international accolades. That first album featured guest appearances by such luminaries of Brazilian music as Milton Nascimento, Gilberto Gil, and Djavan. Her second album, *Nós* ("Us") (Hannibal), was released in Feb. 2000 with equal success.

A convert from Catholicism to the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé religion of her ancestors, Rodrigues's music includes carnival sambas, ancient Afro-Brazilian drum patterns, and music for the Roman Catholic mass. She will be accompanied by Deborah Cheyne (viola), Luiz Brazil (acoustic guitar), Raul Mascarenhas (saxophone/flute), Tony Botelho

(more ...)

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(acoustic bass), and Mila Schiavo and Ronaldinho Silva (percussion). According to the singer, "my music is a mix of everything that I've heard in my life and that has happened in my life — in my childhood, in my church. I don't define it as something special, but a music that touches everybody."

The final performance in the VIVA! series is by *The Ghazal Ensemble*, with Shujaat Hussain Khan of India (*sitar*), Kayhan Kalhor of Iran, (Persian *kamancheh*), and the incomparable Swapan Chaudhuri of India (*tabla*). They will perform the evocative and sensuous songs of the Silk Road in Gartner Auditorium Friday, May 5. The *Plain Dealer* called them "engrossing ...ecstatic ... the music seemed to fly and the audience went along for the ride." Only **limited tickets are available** for this performance; they may be purchased by calling **1-888-CMA-0033** or online at **www.clemusart.com**.

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Promotional support for VIVA! Performing Arts Festival is provided by WCLV 95/5.

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